

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current
scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

HOMEMAKERS' NEWS

Thursday, March 23, 1939.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "INFORMATION ABOUT GOATS' MILK." From the Bureau of Animal Industry,
United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Just why should the mere mention of a goat always provoke a smile? Think of all the old jokes about billy-goats and nanny-goats, and "being the goat" and "getting one's goat", and goats eating tin cans- you probably know a lot more of them. There seems to be something inherently humorous about a goat-- and yet-- that sturdy little animal, which is often called "the poor man's cow" -- has long been recognized as one of our valuable domestic creatures.

Smile if you will --- but the theme of today's chat is the plain little "nanny-goat". Folks who live in densely populated countries all over the world keep goats for their milk, and use it in all the ways cow's milk is used. You'll find goats where it would be quite impossible to have a cow. Either because a goat costs less than a cow in the first place, or because a goat requires less space for pasturage and raising feed than does a cow.

In Switzerland and other mountainous parts of Europe, goats can be pastured on steep hillsides where cows could hardly stand. Most of these European people are also fond of cheese, and make special kinds from goat's milk or goat's milk mixed with other kinds of milk.

But aren't you surprised to learn that we have over a million milk goats right here in the United States? That's according to the last census. And aside from other possible reasons for this large number of milk goats, one very important use for their milk is in infant feeding. Apparently it has long been known that goat's milk is readily digestible. Medical literature cites many cases where very young babies have thrived when taken off cow's milk and put on goat's milk. Special goat farms have been established near large cities to supply the milk ordered by doctors for infant feeding.

Now let me make one thing clear right here: I'm not trying to start a goat's milk fad. Ordinary adult folks like you and me, who can get all the cow's milk we need may never have occasion even to try goat's milk. Some of our rehabilitation families, who can't afford cows, have solved their milk problems with goats, just as some of the European farmers have. And the doctors from time to time have to bar cow's milk from the diet of an especially delicate child. The goat's milk ordered then costs about four times as much as cow's milk and is used for a relatively short time as a result of the cost.

One claim has been made about goat's milk which has troubled nutritionists. Some of the infants have not thrived when fed on it, and apparently developed anemia. It was also thought this might be due to a vitamin deficiency in the goat's milk, or to the composition of the fat. Nobody really knew. Very few reliable scientific data were available on the composition and properties of goat's milk, in spite of its wide-spread use.

So the Bureau of Animal Industry of the U. S. Department of Agriculture carried on a 3-year study of the subject. The Bureau has recently reported on that study. In case you're interested, the milk from two kinds of goats was mixed. They were Saanens and Toggenburgs. This milk was compared with milk from a herd of Holstein cows, and from a herd of Jerseys.

This study established several points. One is that goat's milk is very similar to milk from Holstein cows in its percentage of water, protein, fat, and lactose (milk sugar). Goat's milk varies from season to season more than cow's milk does. The fat globules of goat's milk are much smaller than those in milk from either Holstein or Jersey cows, and the curd is softer than that of either of the cows' milks. These characteristics help to make goat's milk easily digested.

The next point is about the mineral content of the three kinds of milk. All three- goat's milk, milk from Holstein cows and milk from Jersey cows were found efficient in iron and also deficient in copper. This accounted for evidences of anemia in babies fed exclusively on a milk diet. It made no difference whether the milk was from cows or goats. This fact leads to a simple correction in feeding formulas for infants. As soon as additional iron and copper are supplied the anemia disappears. Differences in calcium and phosphorus were very slight in the 3 milks and all showed satisfactory amounts.

Now about vitamins. The milk of the Jersey cows used led all three kinds of milk analyzed for vitamin A, with goat's milk about the same as Holstein milk in winter, but not quite so good in summer-time. The goat's milk had a comparatively high rating for vitamins B and G, both in summer and winter. None of the milks were adequate for vitamin C. So when goat's milk is used for infant feeding supplementary orange juice or tomato juice is needed, just as with cow's milk. There were no marked differences among the three milks as to vitamin D.

Finally, the investigators found that when secreted, goat's milk is comparatively free from bacteria. More than 60 percent of the samples drawn from individual goats showed no evidence of bacterial growth. When bottled under normal conditions, the count was found to be comparatively low. Accordingly it is considered reasonably certain that goat's milk can be marketed which will have a low bacterial count.

Remember, however, that these interesting facts do not constitute a reason for everybody's using goat's milk. The chief value of goat's milk in this country, aside from the individual families that have "Nannies" instead of "Bossies" is for special infant feeding, and the amount available even for that purpose is limited. But the investigations just concluded settle some of the doubts about the composition and properties of goat's milk, so that doctors can prescribe it with confidence where it is indicated for babies.

